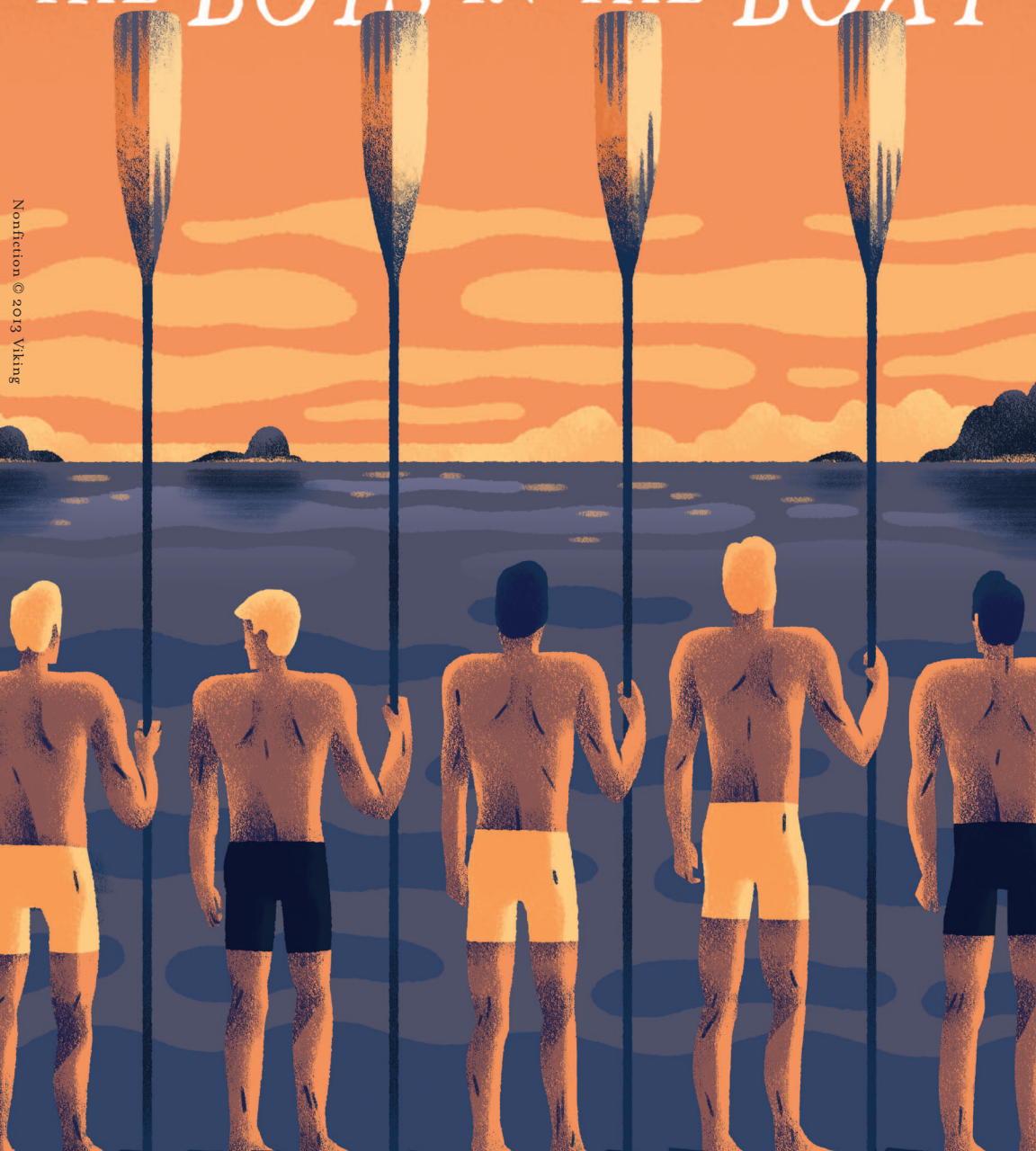


ONE MARYLAND ONE BOOK 2015

Reader's Guide

THE BOYS IN THE BOAT

Nonfiction © 2013 Viking



The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic
Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics

BY DANIEL JAMES BROWN

IMAGINE IF EVERYONE READ THE SAME BOOK AT THE SAME TIME

WHAT NEW THINGS WOULD WE HAVE TO TALK ABOUT WITH EACH OTHER?

In its eighth year, One Maryland One Book remains Maryland's only statewide community reading program. It brings together diverse people in communities across the state through a shared experience: the reading and thoughtful discussion of the same book. Each year, the selection process is guided by a common theme, which this year is "sports." The Maryland Center for the Book at the Maryland Humanities Council partners with public libraries, high schools, colleges and universities, museums, bookstores, correctional facilities, and other organizations to bring book-centered discussions and other related events to communities across Maryland.

The Maryland Humanities Council has at the core of its mission the deep commitment to provide Marylanders with an opportunity to gather and discuss issues important to their lives and communities, believing that a great work of literature provides an excellent springboard to do so. One Maryland One Book is not just about reading or literature, though; it is also about bringing people together for meaningful dialogue.

The book selected for 2015 is *The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics* by Daniel James Brown.

GET THE BOOK

Pick up a copy of *The Boys in the Boat* at your local public library or bookstore and start a conversation with your family, friends, coworkers, or even the person sitting next to you as you ride the bus or train. This is your chance to take a moment to have a great conversation with an old friend or to make a new one.

JOIN IN

We invite you to join our Honorary Chair, Laura Lippman, and thousands of other Marylanders at one of the many book discussions and related events happening around the state in September and October.

If you're out and about, you might find copies of *The Boys in the Boat* in unexpected places. Our Wandering Books can be found in public spaces such as parks, buses, malls, county fairs, and doctors' offices. If you find a copy, it's yours for a short time. Register the book online so we can see how far it travels (instructions are included inside the book), read it, review it, and then leave it behind for someone else to enjoy.

To find One Maryland One Book programs in your area, go to www.onemarylandonebook.org and click on the Calendar.

For all the latest information, Like or Follow us:



Look for Daniel James Brown at venues across the state in late September, including the Baltimore Book Festival on Sunday, September 27.



Scan this code on your smartphone to view the book trailer for *The Boys in the Boat*.

LETTER FROM HONORARY CHAIR LAURA LIPPMAN

photo by Jan Cobb



Thank you for joining me and the Maryland Humanities Council for One Maryland One Book, our state's community reading project. I am delighted to step into the role of honorary chair this year to support reading and great literature. The concept of bringing people together from around the state through the reading of one book, selected by a devoted group of literary enthusiasts, has been wholeheartedly embraced by Marylanders since its launch in 2008. There is joy and learning to be found in exploring with other avid readers a book that you simply could not put down. That experience lies at the heart of One Maryland One Book. Whether you've read with us every year or are new to the program, welcome!

This year's book, *The Boys in the Boat* by Daniel James Brown, is inevitably a favorite of mine, centering as it does on the sport of rowing. But the book would not have become such a runaway success if it appealed only to rowing fans. It is the kind of story that we like to think is quintessentially American, in which underestimated people work hard and succeed. I'm not sure that the United States owns such stories, but I know this book will appeal to anyone who has ever felt like an underdog. It celebrates hard work by modest men. It is utterly irresistible.

We encourage you to pick up a copy of *The Boys in the Boat* and join the conversation. A program of the Maryland Humanities Council's Maryland Center for the Book, One Maryland One Book is made possible each year through the generosity of our sponsors and community partners. We greatly thank them for their support. Find out how to get involved at www.onemarylandonebook.org.

Sincerely,
Laura Lippman

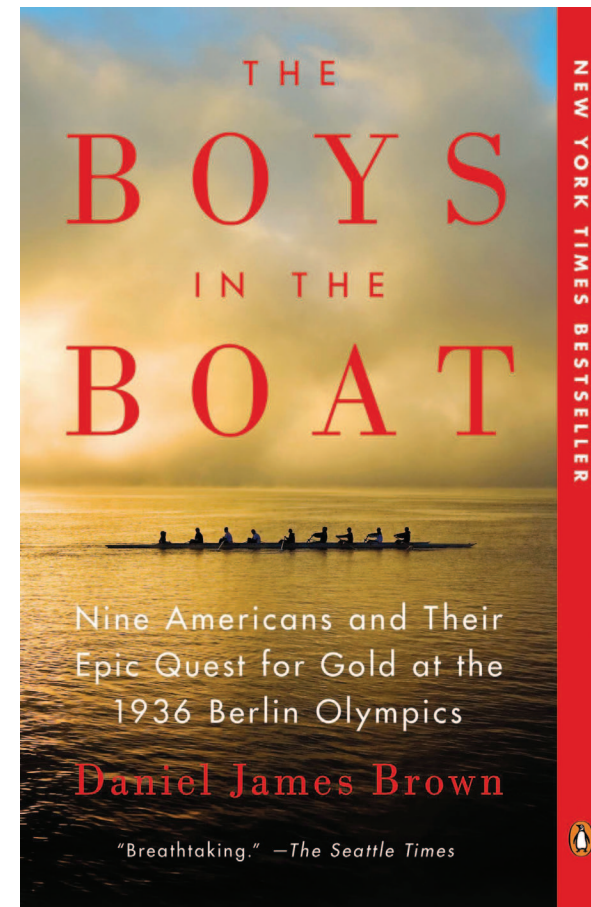
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Daniel James Brown grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area and attended Diablo Valley College, the University of California at Berkeley, and UCLA. Brown taught writing at San Jose State University and Stanford before becoming a technical writer and editor. He now writes narrative nonfiction books full time. Brown's primary interest as a writer is in bringing compelling historical events to life as vividly and accurately as possible.

Brown lives in the country outside of Seattle, Washington with his wife, two daughters, and an assortment of cats, dogs, chickens, and honeybees. When he is not writing, he is likely to be birding, gardening, fly fishing, reading American history, or chasing bears away from the bee hives.



photo by Robin V Brown



ABOUT THE BOOK*

The Boys in the Boat celebrates the 1936 U.S. men's Olympic eight-oar rowing team—working class boys who stormed the rowing world, transformed the sport, and galvanized the attention of millions of Americans.

The sons of loggers, shipyard workers, and farmers from the American West, the boys took on and defeated successive echelons of privilege and power. They vanquished the sons of bankers and senators rowing for elite eastern universities. They defeated the sons of British aristocrats rowing for Oxford and Cambridge. And finally, in an extraordinary race in Berlin they stunned the Aryan sons of the Nazi state as they rowed for gold in front of Adolf Hitler.

Against the grim backdrop of the Great Depression, they reaffirmed the American notion that merit, in the end, can outweigh birthright. They reminded the country of what can be done when everyone quite literally pulls together. And they provided hope that in the titanic struggle that lay just ahead, the ruthless might of the Nazis would not prevail over American grit, determination, and optimism.

And even as it chronicles the boys' collective achievement, *The Boys in the Boat* is also the heartwarming story of one young man in particular. Cast aside by his family at an early age, abandoned and left to fend for himself, Joe Rantz rows not just for glory, but to regain his shattered self-regard, to dare again to trust in others, and to find his way back to a place he can call home.

*Description from Penguin Books

ADDITIONAL HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Great Depression (1929–39) was the most severe and prolonged economic downturn in the history of the Western industrialized world. After the stock market crash of 1929, millions of investors went bankrupt. On October 24, 1929, also known as “Black Thursday,” a then-record 12.9 million shares were traded. Five days later, on “Black Tuesday,” 16 million shares were traded. Millions of investments were suddenly worthless. As a result, consumer spending and investment dropped, leaving industries at a standstill and causing unemployment to skyrocket. By 1933, more than 25% of the civilian labor force was unemployed. Nearly half of the country’s banks had failed. Until Congress passed the Social Security Act in 1935, the U.S. was the only industrialized country without social security or unemployment insurance. Approximately 15 million wage earners were without a job and without any support.

President Herbert Hoover, who had formerly served as U.S. Secretary of Commerce, believed that government should not directly intervene in the economy and that it should not create jobs or provide economic relief for citizens. While Hoover hoped that the U.S. economy would bounce back naturally, it kept getting worse. In 1932, Americans jumped at their opportunity to elect a new president, and Franklin D. Roosevelt won the election by a margin of nearly 18%. President Roosevelt’s administration passed legislation to stabilize industry and agriculture, create jobs, and stimulate recovery. Roosevelt created bank holidays and a new banking structure to prevent the Great Depression from reoccurring. The programs and institutions created from his New Deal gave jobs to the unemployed, boosted the country’s production, and steadily grew the economy.



THE 1936 OLYMPICS AND THE RISE OF THE THIRD REICH

In 1933, Nazi party leader Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. Also known as the Third Reich, Hitler’s Nazi party considered the Germanic people to be the purest representatives of the Aryan race. Nazis believed they were part of the “master race” and needed to eliminate the other “undesirable” races. Racism, especially anti-Semitism, was the central feature of the regime, but the Nazis also persecuted many other groups including the Romani people (commonly known as gypsies), homosexuals, and those with intellectual disabilities. Within a year of Hitler being named chancellor, Germany implemented a boycott of Jewish shops and quit both the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations. By 1936, Nazis had promulgated the Nuremberg Laws, regulating social classes and preventing interfaith relationships, succeeded in reoccupying the Rhineland, and intervened in the Spanish Civil War.

Hitler and his inner circle saw the 1936 Olympics as the perfect opportunity to sell their philosophy. Joseph Goebbels, Nazi Minister of Propaganda, made sure every detail of the Olympics made Germany appear confident and powerful. Documentarian Leni Riefenstahl captured the Olympics in a stylized film that forever preserved the grandiose stadiums, idyllic Berlin, and thunderous chants of Germans saluting “Heil Hitler!” As in many other countries, athletic unions in the United States were torn about competing in the 1936 games. However, for the most part, the boycott movement failed. Visiting athletes at the Berlin games saw Germany the way that the Nazi party propagandists wanted them to see it: clean, peaceful, and tolerant. Anti-Jewish signs had been temporarily removed, police roundups of “undesirables” were covered up, and anti-homosexuality laws were temporarily lax. Most Olympic participants and tourists would not realize what the Nazi party had covered up until years later.

Citations:

History.com Staff. "The Great Depression." *The Great Depression*. 2009. Accessed May 27, 2015. www.history.com/topics/great-depression

Chen, C.R. "What Can We Learn from the Depression?" *The Economist*. November 8, 2013. Accessed May 27, 2015. www.economist.com/blogs/freexchange/2013/11/economic-history-0

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "The Nazi Olympics Berlin 1936." *Holocaust Encyclopedia*. June 20, 2014. Accessed May 27, 2015. www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005680

The Editors of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Berlin 1936 Olympic Games." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. April 8, 2015. Accessed May 27, 2015. www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/972375/Berlin-1936-Olympic-Games

George Mason University. "A Chronology of the Third Reich (1919-1945)." *The Latin Library*. Accessed May 27, 2015. www.thelatinlibrary.com/imperialism/notes/hitlerchron.html

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Joe Rantz had a tragic and tumultuous childhood. What part of his story surprised you the most? Did you relate to any of his experiences?
- 2 The thread of Joe and Joyce's love story is woven throughout the book. Why do you think their relationship continued to grow stronger despite poverty, class prejudice, and being apart so often?
- 3 Every member of the 1936 Washington crew was affected by the Great Depression in some way. How did the team's collective struggle unite them?
- 4 While the story focuses on Joe Rantz, his teammates, and their journey, it also relates a great deal about the generation that grew up during the Great Depression. What struck you the most about this time in U.S. history?
- 5 As a logger and a Grand Coulee Dam laborer, Joe developed a deep respect for nature. What do you think this says about Joe? Do you think this respect made him a better rower?
- 6 The Washington crew had two influential mentors who viewed rowing differently but maintained the same goal. How did George Pocock and Al Ubrickson each influence the team? Do you think the boys could have won without the mentoring of both men?
- 7 The boys' success united the U.S. across generations, regardless of class, from New York to Seattle. Even Washington's competitors admitted the varsity crew was destined for the Olympics. What was your favorite moment when the country began to share the boys' dream?
- 8 Joseph Goebbels and Leni Riefenstahl created a dramatic Olympics that the boys never expected and would never forget. The 1936 Games were exceedingly lavish, photographed and filmed from every angle, with ticket sales that reaped a profit of more than \$1 million dollars. How are today's Olympics similar? How are they different?
- 9 How did the boys' interpretation of Germany and Hitler reflect what the typical American thought of the rising conflict in Europe?
- 10 As Daniel James Brown mentions in the epilogue, the 1936 Washington crew members reunited at least once a year and regularly participated in anniversary rows in the old Husky Clipper. Many other lifelong friendships between crew members are referenced throughout the book. Why do you think rowing inspires such close relationships? What did the story of the Washington University rowing team reveal about the power of teamwork?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Each year we hope that your participation in One Maryland One Book inspires you to continue talking about the many thought-provoking topics examined in the selected book. The following list of books, movies, and plays might also be of interest after reading *The Boys in the Boat*. We encourage you to continue your exploration!

BOOKS

Whose Names Are Unknown by Sanora Babb

Babb's novel was originally slated for publication in 1939 but was shelved when *The Grapes of Wrath* cornered the market on Great Depression literature. Babb gives a human face to the Oklahoma farmers who escaped the Dust Bowl only to endure migrant labor camps in California.

Red Rose Crew: A True Story Of Women, Winning, And The Water by Daniel J. Boyne

In 1976, the members of the first women's international crew team struggled to overcome the glass ceiling of sports in order to secure women's rowing's first Olympic appearance in 1976. (Nonfiction)

Rainwater by Sandra Brown

Celebrating the spirit and determination of Americans during the Great Depression, this moving tale helps readers experience a bygone generation and a strong young widow who must rise above her circumstances.

The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl by Timothy Egan

This winner of the 2006 National Book Award vividly conveys the fear and helplessness of Americans living in the Dust Bowl, told with information from people who experienced it firsthand. Ultimately, the story is one of endurance and hope. (Nonfiction)

The Great Crash 1929 by John Kenneth Galbraith

A bestseller since 1955, this history of the stock market crash entertains as much as it informs. Galbraith's economic explanations are approachable and relatable to contemporary issues. (Nonfiction)

Course Correction: A Story of Rowing and Resilience in the Wake of Title IX by Ginny Gilder

Gilder overcame disadvantage and a troubled youth by escaping into the competitive world of rowing. Empowered and validated by the sport, Gilder's story personalizes the Title IX struggle. (Nonfiction)

Hitler's Olympics: The 1936 Berlin Olympic Games by Christopher Hilton

Through interviews, diaries, and articles, Hilton recreates what it was like to experience the Berlin Games firsthand. (Nonfiction)

Flat Water Tuesday by Ron Irwin

Rob Carrey is a documentary filmmaker whose invitation to his boarding school reunion pulls him back into his past, when his position in the school's elite crew was jeopardized by a moral conundrum.

BOOKS (cont.)

The Albany Trio by William Kennedy

Kennedy's witty, honest, and semi-autobiographical Depression-era trilogy features *Legs*, *Billy Phelan's Greatest Game*, and the Pulitzer Prize-winning final installment, *Ironweed*.

Mind Over Water: Lessons on Life from the Art of Rowing by Craig Lambert

Craig Lambert transforms the grit and discipline of rowing as a metaphor for a self-directed, fulfilling life. (Nonfiction)

Triumph: The Untold Story of Jesse Owens and Hitler's Olympics by Jeremy Schaap

At the 1936 Olympics, Jesse Owens disproved the Nazi's Aryan racial supremacy in front of the Führer himself. Schaap explores where Owens found his strength and how he became so courageous. (Nonfiction)

The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany by William L. Shirer

This winner of the 1961 National Book Award remains the definitive study of Hitler's inner circle and the hierarchy and terror of the Nazi Party. (Nonfiction)

The Forgotten Man: A New History of the Great Depression by Amity Shlaes

Inspired by the effects of FDR's New Deal rather than the causes, this new history of the Depression describes everything from the stock market crash to the details of government programs from an economic point of view. (Nonfiction)

Sea Glass by Anita Shreve

In this masterfully woven novel, the viewpoints of six principal characters come together in the aftermath of the 1929 stock market crash as New Hampshire mill workers struggle to carry on.

Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck

Laborers George and Lennie work hard just to maintain a hand-to-mouth existence. Just as it seems they might settle down in the Salinas Valley, a dramatic event changes everything.

Half-Broke Horses by Jeannette Walls

Walls dramatizes her courageous and strong grandmother's life using the history of the Great Depression and natural disasters as the background.

YOUNG ADULTS

The Nazi Olympics: Berlin 1936 by Susan D. Bachrach

See how the organizers, politicians, and athletes presented themselves and get a glimpse into who they were behind the scenes in this vivid book filled with evocative photography. (Nonfiction)

The Great American Dust Bowl by Don Brown

Brown brings the Dust Bowl to life with kinetic and bright artwork in this graphic novel of one of America's most catastrophic natural events. (Nonfiction)

Head of the River by Pip Harry

Tall, gifted, and the offspring of Olympians, superstar siblings Leni and Cristian Popescu are set to row their school to victory. With their athletic prowess, how could they lose?

Turtle in Paradise by Jennifer L. Holm

Smart and strong Turtle moves to Key West so her mother can get a job during the Great Depression. But moving means that Turtle is in a new place without any friends. Will Florida help her finally open up?

The Book Thief by Marcus Zusak

Living outside of Munich in 1939, foster child Liesel Meminger steals to survive until she finds books and learns how to read, aided by a Jewish neighbor.

CHILDREN

Children of the Great Depression by Russell Freedman

Russell Freedman's photography illuminates the lives of the American children affected by the economic and social changes of the Great Depression, from boxcar kids to migrant farm laborers. (Nonfiction)

The Gardener by Sarah Stewart

After the stock market crashes, Lydia Grace Finch must stay with her wealthy Uncle Jim, a cantankerous baker. Though they don't get along at first, Lydia creates a beautiful garden that eventually brings much-needed smiles to Uncle Jim and the neighbors.

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry by Mildred D. Taylor

Cassie Logan is a smart and inquisitive girl who lives in Mississippi at the height of the Depression where she and her family struggle to maintain their integrity, pride, and independence in the face of racism and social injustice.

Harry Goes Rowing by Karin Tetlow

Philadelphia's history of rowing inspired this children's story about Harry, a horse training to be a coxswain, and his horse friends from the carousel who are also learning to row.

Moon Over Manifest by Clare Vanderpool

Abilene Tucker has been abandoned by her father, but she never stops thinking about him. When she gets the opportunity to visit his hometown, she begins a quest for the man her father once was and makes new friends who help in her search.

Jesse Owens: Fastest Man Alive by Carole Boston Weatherford

Growing up during segregation prepared Jesse Owens for struggle. Learn how the legendary athlete overcame adversity and became an Olympic champion before an audience of Nazis who said that Owens was "inferior." (Nonfiction)

FILM

The Dust Bowl (2012, 240 min., unrated)—Directed by Ken Burns

Ken Burns uses survivor interviews, photographs, and rare film footage to tell the PBS story of the American breadbasket during the 1930s Dust Bowl in this landmark four-part mini-series.

Jack and the Dust Bowl (2012, 20 min., unrated)—Directed by Brandon McCormick

Jack Spriggs, a poor farmer from Alabama, struggles to keep his family farm going during the Great Depression. This short film is a great choice for family viewing.

The Grapes of Wrath (1940, 129 min., unrated)—Directed by John Ford

When Tom Joad's farm is foreclosed, he joins his uncle's family in a quest to move west to California, the land of opportunity. Based on the John Steinbeck novel.

Inside the Third Reich (1982, 300 min., unrated)—Directed by Marvin J. Chomsky

Albert Speer, Hitler's architect and friend, and his meteoric rise in the Nazi hierarchy are the focus of this dramatization based on the memoir of same name.

Cinderella Man (2005, 144 min., rated PG-13)—Directed by Ron Howard

Boxer James Braddock's true life struggle and comeback during the Great Depression helped a generation believe in the power of hard work and hope. This emotional and relatable story continues to inspire.

Seabiscuit (2003, 140 min., rated PG-13)—Directed by Gary Ross

Based on the book by Laura Hillenbrand, an underestimated horse, trainer, and jockey work together to overcome the odds during the Great Depression, when the underdog winning mattered most.

Kit Kittredge: An American Girl (2008, 101 min., rated G)—Directed by Patricia Rozema

During the Great Depression, Kit Kittredge helps run her mother's boarding house when her father loses his job. A fun and touching lesson of small blessings and the power of family and friends.

Olympia Parts 1 and 2 (1938, 226 min. combined, unrated)—Directed by Leni Riefenstahl

Witness the Olympic competition the way the boys of the University of Washington crew saw it in this two-part documentary of the Berlin Games, commissioned by the 1936 Olympic Committee and directed by Riefenstahl.

True Blue (1996, 118 min., rated R)—Directed by Ferdinand Fairfax

The true story of the Oxford Cambridge "Boat Race" mutiny grants viewers a look inside the passion and competition of rowing.

PLAYS

The Diviners by Jim Leonard, Jr. (1980)

Faith and fear are the subjects of this play set in the 1930s during the Great Depression. A mentally challenged boy named Buddy helps his rural townsfolk search for water. After a stranger named C.C. arrives and befriends Buddy, tragedy looms.

The Rainmaker by N. Richard Nash (1954)

Lizzie Curry fears she will be a spinster if she doesn't find a husband soon. While the rest of her town thinks the drought might kill them all, Lizzie travels to find potential husbands. When a con man named Starbuck promises rain in exchange for \$100, he sets off a string of events that could change Lizzie's priorities.



NOTES



The content and resources of this guide were created and compiled by the staff of the Maryland Humanities Council. Portions have been reprinted with permission from Penguin Random House.

One Maryland One Book is sponsored by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, LSTA grant funds, through the Division of Library Development & Services at the Maryland State Department of Education, with additional support from BGE, the Nora Roberts Foundation, Wells Fargo, and M&T Bank.

One Maryland One Book is coordinated by the Maryland Center for the Book, a program of the Maryland Humanities Council, in partnership with Enoch Pratt Free Library.

The Maryland Humanities Council is an educational nonprofit organization. Our mission is to create and support educational experiences in the humanities that inspire all Marylanders to embrace lifelong learning, exchange ideas openly, and enrich their communities. To learn more, visit www.mdhc.org.



Maryland Humanities Council
108 West Centre Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

410.685.0095
www.mdhc.org

A PROGRAM OF



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



LEAD SPONSORS



SPONSORS



ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

